HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET TO WHERE WE WANT TO BE:
IMPLEMENTING THE SHARED VISION BY CREATING A PLAN FOR CONTINUOUS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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CHAPTER

Where are we now?

Demographics
- District
- Schools
- Students
- Staffs
- Community

Perceptions
- Culture
- Climate
- Values and Beliefs

Student Learning
- Summative
- Formative
- Diagnostic

School Processes
- Programs
- Instructional
- Organizational
- Administrative
- Continuous School Improvement

Who are we?

How do we do business?

How are our students doing?

What are our processes?

What is working/not working?

How did we get to where we are?

Contributing Causes

Predictive Analytics

Where do we want to be?

Purpose

Mission

Why do we exist?

Vision
Goals
Student Learning Standards

Where do we want to go?

How can we get to where we want to be?

Continuous Improvement Plan
- Objectives
- Strategies
- Activities
- Budget

Implementation Strategies
- Leadership Structures
- Collaborative Strategies
- Professional Learning
- Partnerships

How will we implement?

Is what we are doing making a difference?

Formative and Summative Evaluation

How will we evaluate our efforts?

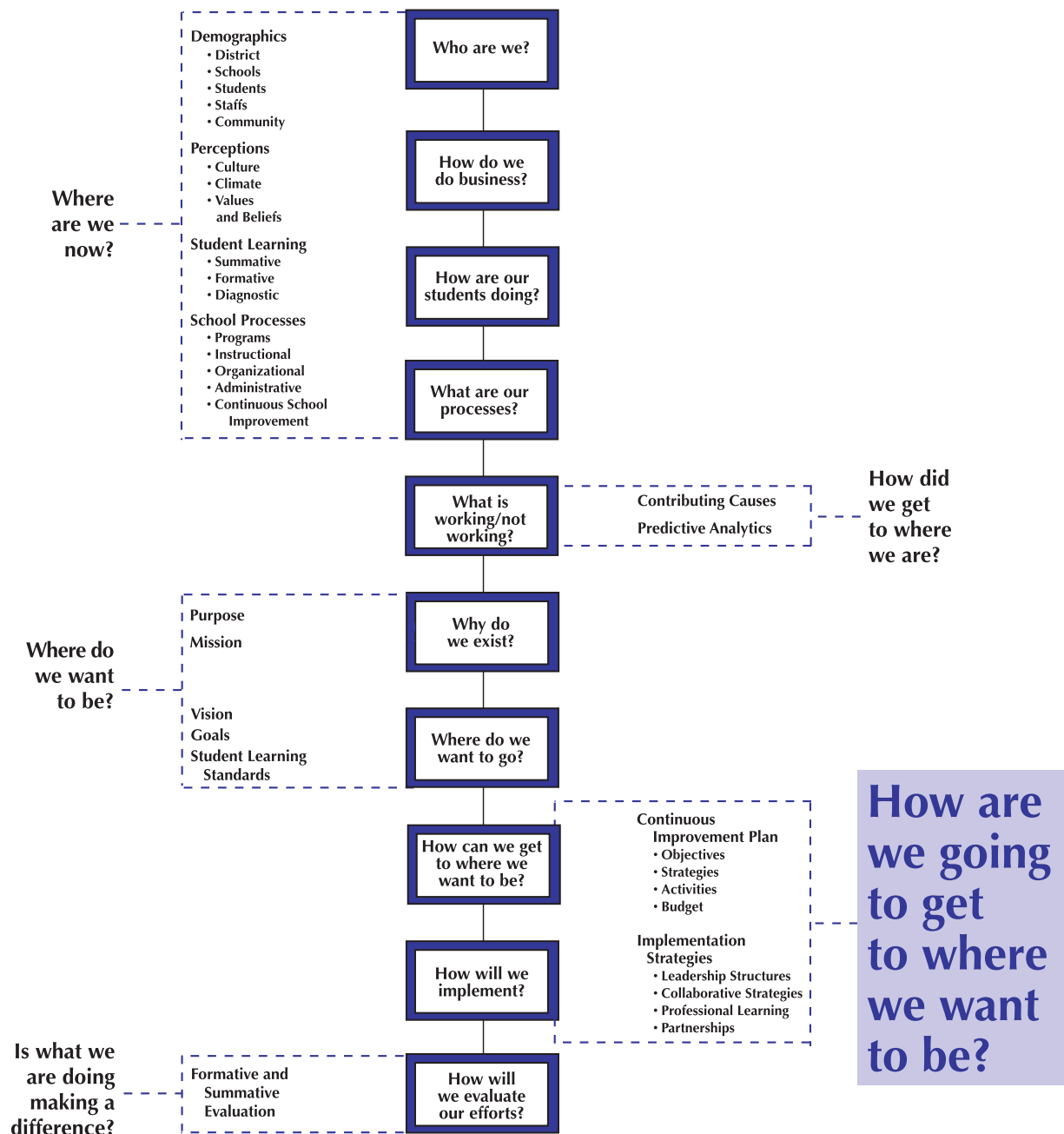## How are we going to get to where we want to be?

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Vision without action is merely a dream.
Action without vision just passes the time.
Vision with action can change the world.

Joel A. Barker
Author and Futurist

If the vision clarifies what we are going to teach, how we are going to teach, how we are going to assess, and how everyone is going to treat each other, then the continuous school improvement plan must spell out how all of these actions are going to occur.

If the vision clarifies what we are going to teach, how we are going to teach, how we are going to assess, and how everyone is going to treat each other, then the continuous school improvement plan must spell out how all of these actions are going to occur. To get the shared vision implemented, a strong plan based on collaborative structures and data use is necessary to improve learning for *all* students.

The continuous school improvement plan to implement a vision is very different from a plan to close a gap or to meet a target. A continuous school improvement plan moves the whole system forward to a vision, as opposed to just closing a gap. Effective continuous school improvement plans—

A continuous school improvement plan moves the whole system forward to a vision, as opposed to just closing a gap.

◆ Implement the shared vision.

◆ Include all staff from where they are. In other words, what teachers know and are able to do are taken into consideration. The plan includes strategies to move all staff forward.

◆ Support staff in implementing the vision.

◆ Are grounded in standards implementation.

◆ Focus on teacher/administrator actions, not student actions.

◆ Include ways to monitor vision implementation.

HOW WILL WE IMPLEMENT

The most powerful approaches to implementing a school vision and plan focus on three supportive implementation strategies:

• *Leadership*
• *Professional Learning*
• *Partnerships*

The most powerful approaches to implementing a school vision and plan focus on three supportive implementation strategies:

◆ Leadership

◆ Professional Learning

◆ Partnerships

These elements must be woven throughout the continuous school improvement plan.

Leadership assists schools in creating shared decision making structures to implement the vision. A leadership structure defines how teachers and administrators are going to implement the vision, when they are going to meet to

collaborate, align resources, review data and support each others' instruction, and review their progress toward the implementation of the vision.

Ongoing, job-embedded *Professional Learning* helps teachers, administrators, and staff members learn in order to change/improve the manner in which they work, i.e., how they make decisions; gather, analyze, and utilize data; plan, teach, and monitor achievement; meet the needs of students; collaborate with each other; evaluate personnel; and assess the impact of instruction and assessment on student learning.

Partnership Development lays out the purposes of, approaches to, and planning for educational partnerships with business and community groups, parents, and other educational professionals to increase student learning and prepare all students for college and careers. When schools are clear about their outcomes, others can more effectively contribute to that end.

Creating the Continuous School Improvement Plan

A continuous school improvement plan lays out how to implement a vision, including strategies and activities, person(s) responsible, measurement, expenditures, estimated costs, funding sources, and timelines.

An example *Somewhere Continuous School Improvement Plan* is shown in Figure 10.1. Steps in creating a continuous school improvement plan follows: (See Appendix L, *Continuous School Improvement Plan.*)

Step 1. **Enroll a Planning Team.** It is not necessary to have every staff member involved in creating a continuous school improvement plan. While it is important that all staff agree with the strategies, which they did while using data to create the shared vision, it can become cumbersome and inefficient if too many people are working on the plan at the same time. We recommend that a representative group, such as the Leadership Team or a Planning Team draft the plan, take it to staff for review, improvement, acceptance, and commitment to its implementation. Never should one person draft the plan in isolation.

Step 2. **Review the Data.** The planning team reviews the analyses of data that the entire staff examined together.

Step 3. **Reflect on the School Vision.** When the vision is done well, it will be very clear what needs to be put in the plan and implemented, with respect to curriculum (what we teach), instruction (how we teach the curriculum), assessment (how we measure learning), and environment (how each person treats every other person)—generally, what we hope to accomplish together.

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Figure 10.1
EXAMPLE: SOMEWHERE SCHOOL CONTINUOUS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN ~ 2013-14

Goal 1: Ensure the *all* students graduate from high school, college, and career ready for citizenship and success in the 21st Century workplace.
- Provide a learning environment that develops *life-long learners.*
- Build a collaborative professional community that values and strives for continuous organizational improvement.
- Provide resources that support work typical of the 21st Century workplace (e.g., technology).
- Help *all* parents help their students to succeed.
- Develop an insatiable hunger for self-improvement among staff, students, and community.

Goal 2: Bring the community into the life of the school and the school into the life of the community.

Goal 3: Provide a physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe environment that encourages students to become creators and innovators that will improve the world.

Goal #1: Ensure that all students graduate from high school, college and career ready for citizenship and success in the 21st Century workplace.

Strategy/Action	Person(s) Responsible	Measurement	Resources Needed	Due Date	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Align instruction and materials with Common Core State Standards (CCSS): All grade levels have studied the essential standards they will teach for each curricular area. Each essential standard has been scaffolded (to feature needed skills, concepts, and materials), vertically aligned, mapped, and paced for all curricular areas.	Whole Staff/ Ongoing	Essential standards are documented for all curricular areas for all grade levels. Grade-level teams agree on the standards. Cross-grade-level teams agree on the standards. Documentation of all essential standards show them to be scaffolded, mapped, vertically aligned, and paced.	Instructional materials. Technology spelled out in the technology budget plan.	Start of the school year.	X											
Improve instructional strategies and student learning: All teachers will use the CCSS to target instruction. A. Learning objectives will be clearly stated. B. Students will understand the importance of the learning objective. C. Teachers will frequently check for understanding and adjust instruction as needed. D. Instruction is student-centered, technology infused, with students engaged in authentic, meaningful, higher level thinking. E. Attainment of learning objectives will be based on student performance data. F. Partnerships with the community will be incorporated in the learning, as spelled out in the Partnership Plan, and Goal #2.	Teachers / Ongoing Principal	Classroom observations that describe what instruction and the classroom would look like when the CCSS are implemented will also determine if, and how, teachers are: • using the essential standards to target instruction; • creating clear learning objectives to teach the essential standards and to make sure students understand their importance; • checking for understanding and adjusting instruction as needed.	Substitute time for classroom observations, feedback, and support.	Ongoing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		

Figure 10.1 (Continued)
EXAMPLE: SOMEWHERE SCHOOL CONTINUOUS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN ~ 2013-14

Goal 1: Ensure the *all* students graduate from high school, college, and career ready for citizenship and success in the 21st Century workplace.
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Goal #1: Ensure that all students graduate from high school, college and career ready for citizenship and success in the 21st Century workplace.

Strategy/Action	Person(s) Responsible	Measurement	Resources Needed	Due Date	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Each grade level uses assessments that are embedded in every lesson, as well as common, formative assessments that are administered frequently.																
A. Grade levels assess each essential standard, every 2-3 weeks, and conduct data team meetings to discuss performance for most of them.	Subject-Area Grade-Level Teams/ Ongoing	Classroom observations that describe what instruction and the classroom would look like when the CCSS and the school vision are implemented will also determine if, and how, teachers are:	Some substitute time for classroom observations, feedback, and support.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
B. Grade level teams and the Data Leadership Team look at the data from our assessments to determine alignment, within and across grade levels, and the effectiveness of instructional strategies and programs.		• using grade level assessments of each standard;														
C. Grade level teams and the Data Leadership Team look at the data from our assessments to determine which students are not meeting proficiency, those that are, and what to do about it.		• administering common formative assessments every 2-3 weeks; • attending data team meetings about the assessment of each essential standard;														
D. Agreements are made on the skill levels and benchmarks for at-risk students in all subject areas for all grades.		Documentation exists that grade-level teams and then schoolwide-data-team meetings review the results of the assessments, and check for alignment.														
E. Results from assessments will be shared with students and parents, and merged with student self-assessments.																
F. Feedback to students will be timely and specific.																
G. Proficiency and growth will be acknowledged and celebrated on a regular basis.		Evidence exists that the meeting minutes are shared with all teachers, and that needed adjustments are made in classrooms.														
H. Student goals will be based on assessments, and will be shared with students and parents at goal-setting conferences.																

The timeline column header reads **Timeline**.

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Figure 10.1 (Continued)

EXAMPLE: SOMEWHERE SCHOOL CONTINUOUS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN ~ 2013-14

Goal 1: Ensure the *all* students graduate from high school, college, and career ready for citizenship and success in the 21st Century workplace.
- Provide a learning environment that develops *life-long learners*.
- Build a collaborative professional community that values and strives for continuous organizational improvement.
- Provide resources that support work typical of the 21st Century workplace (e.g., technology).
- Help *all* parents help their students to succeed.
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Goal 3: Provide a physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe environment that encourages students to become creators and innovators that improve the world.

Goal #1: Ensure that all students graduate from high school, college and career ready for citizenship and success in the 21st Century workplace.

Strategy/Action	Person(s) Responsible	Measurement	Resources Needed	Due Date	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Professional development and collaboration: Professional development and collaboration is frequent and ongoing.																
A. Grade levels meet every Wednesday from 1:45 to 3:00. Collaboration is focused on results of formative assessments and on effective instructional strategies.	All staff	Leadership structure and process flowcharts detail how collaboration will work for all teachers.	Early release Wednesday support.				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
B. Cross-grade-level teams meet alternate Wednesdays from 3:05 to 4:15.																
C. Leadership Team meets Thursdays from 3:05 to 4:30.																
D. Data Leadership Team will meet as needed to prepare assessment results for grade level teams.																
E. Whole staff meets once a month for ongoing professional development aligned to our vision and plan.																
F. Schoolwide, we will use peer coaching to support deep implementation of vision strategies and the CCSS.																

(Timeline header: **Timeline**)

Step 4. **Set Goals.** Schoolwide goals need to be set with the whole staff before the actual writing of the plan commences. It is ideal to set schoolwide goals while creating the shared vision. Goals are intended outcomes of the vision. They are stated in broad, general, abstract, and largely measurable terms. Schools should have only two or three school goals. Goals should:

◆ Give the school a long term vision.

◆ Be realistic, but ambitious at the same time.

◆ Drive action to the purpose and vision of the school.

◆ Have at least one objective that describes how the goal will be measured.

◆ Help the school reach district and state goals.

Goals should not specify how the schools will achieve the goal.

EXAMPLE: Somewhere School Goal

Ensure that all students graduate from high school, college and career ready for citizenship and success in the 21st Century workplace.

Step 5. **Identify Objectives.** Draft objectives that will close the gap between where the school is right now and where it wants to be, for each of the goals. Objectives are goals that are redrafted in clearly tangible terms, to close gaps. They must be grounded in the data. Objective statements are narrow, specific, concrete, and measurable. When writing objectives, it is important to describe the intended results, rather than the process or means to accomplish them. Objectives are SMART[1] goals: *Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic,* and *Trackable.*

EXAMPLE: Somewhere School Objective

Decrease the number of students at risk of dropping out of school to zero by the end of the school year.

STEPS IN CREATING A CONTINUOUS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Step 1. *Enroll a planning team.*

Step 2. *Review the data.*

Step 3. *Reflect on the school vision.*

Step 4. *Set goals.*

Step 5. *Identify objectives.*

Step 6. *Identify and group strategies to achieve the objectives.*

Step 7. *Actions required to implement the strategies.*

Step 8. *Arrange strategies and activities.*

Step 9. *Determine how achievement of the actions will be measured.*

Step 10. *Use a planning template.*

Step 11. *Establish due dates.*

Step 12. *Determine resources.*

Step 13. *Refine the plan.*

Step 14. *Communicate the plan.*

Step 15. *Monitor the implementation of the plan.*

Step 16. *Evaluate the plan.*

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[1]Conzemius, A., & O'Neill, J. (2005). *The power of SMART goals: Using goals to improve student learning.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

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Step 6. **Identify and Group Strategies to Achieve the Objectives.** Brainstorm and discuss different strategies to reach the objectives, making sure the vision is reviewed, contributing causes of undesirable results have been analyzed, and aggregated commonalities from your comprehensive data analysis are considered as well. Group the strategies under the objectives.

Step 7. **Actions Required to Implement the Strategies.** Below each strategy, list the actions that need to be accomplished to implement the strategy (i.e., *identify students at risk of dropping out of school, review the student-level data*). Think in terms of what the strategy looks like right now, and what you want the strategy to look like when the vision is implemented. What will it take to get there?

Step 8. **Arrange Strategies and Activities.** Arrange the strategies and activities in chronological order. (Keep the first version for later reference and fine-tune the plan in chronological summary form, starting with the action to be taken first.)

Step 9. **Determine How Achievement of the Actions Will Be Measured.** For each activity, determine how you will know if the action is being implemented and the impact of its implementation.

Step 10. **Use a Planning Template.** Using a planning template with labeled columns—strategy/ action, person(s) responsible, measurement, resources, due date, and timeline—place the reorganized strategies and actions in the action column in a manner that is easiest for staff to utilize later. In the column next to each action, identify the person ultimately responsible for the action. Try not to use team names like *Language Arts Action Team* in the person responsible column. Accountability is most effective if the responsibility is delegated to an individual. Responsible persons determine how accountability reviews are conducted, and how to talk with one another about fostering and demonstrating accountability.

Step 11. **Establish Due Dates.** In the column next to "person(s) responsible," write in the due dates. For each strategy or activity (depends on the topic and structure for implementation), determine when the activity must be completed. If your plan has columns that represent months, weeks, and sometimes days, make notations that will indicate when each activity will begin and when it will be completed, by showing an "X" in the cell. Indicate the duration by marking a line between the "Xs" across the months.

Step 12. **Determine Resources.** Determine the financial resources required of each strategy and activity. These budgets, developed in conjunction with the continuous school improvement plan, determine the financial feasibility of the actions for each year. Alterations are made simultaneously and balanced back and forth, while looking for items that can leverage other items. Dollars sometimes limit activities. School staff are often surprised, however, to discover that many times what they have to spend is equivalent to what they can do in a year's time, once they spell out the components and costs. If the latter does not hold true, staff has important and specific information (i.e., the vision, plan, and budget) to utilize in seeking additional support for their efforts. Note that the budget is a part of the continuous school improvement plan and that all school funds are used with the one resulting plan. Everything in the school should be working toward that one continuous school improvement plan and the one school vision. The planning team must have a clear understanding of all budget resources.

Step 13. **Refine the Plan.** With the first draft of the continuous school improvement plan complete, review the elements and the big picture of the plan. Below are some guiding questions:

◆ Are the objectives about improved student learning for all students?

◆ Will this plan lead to student learning for all students?

◆ Will this plan support staff in implementing the vision?

◆ Will the strategies lead to attainment of the objectives?

◆ What evidence do we need to know if the objectives are being met?

◆ Do the strategies address contributing causes?

◆ Are there strategies/actions that can be further collapsed?

◆ Will all staff members know what is expected of them?

◆ Does the plan include new learning required of staff? If so, has training and support been incorporated for each area?

◆ Are the time frames realistic?

◆ How will the ultimate goal of improved student learning for all students be kept at the forefront of everything we do?

◆ How often will the plan and strategies be monitored?

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◆ Whose job is it to monitor the implementation of the plan?

◆ How will new staff members learn about the plan?

Step 14. Communicate the Plan. Determine how the continuous school improvement plan will be documented, communicated, reported, and updated. Communicate progress towards the attainment of the school improvement goals and objectives in newsletters, staff bulletins, websites, and bulletin boards.

Step 15. Monitor the Implementation of the Plan. A part of refining the continuous school improvement plan is ensuring that everything in the plan is aligned to the implementation of the vision, including the leadership structure, curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional learning, etc. When staff members begin to implement the plan, all parts of the plan need to be monitored regularly. The measurement column for the strategies and activities provides a means for monitoring. We recommend that the Leadership Team check the plan for implementation each month, remembering that implementation of a continuous improvement plan requires collaboration and flexibility on the part of the monitors. (See Appendix M, *Monitoring Plan.*)

Step 16. Evaluate the Plan. The entire continuous school improvement plan must be evaluated, with the vision and school goals as targets. This comprehensive evaluation will evaluate the parts and the whole of the plan to indicate if the goals, objectives, and strategies are leading to the attainment of the vision. (See Chapter 12, and *Evaluation of Plan,* Appendix U.)

A Leadership Structure With Clear Roles And Responsibilities For All Staff

Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.
Warren G. Bennis

Every school should have a structure in place that will help every staff member implement the vision, as well as collaborate with colleagues to help each other review data and implement the vision.

We believe the job of leaders is to help everyone in the organization implement the vision. We also believe that each teacher is a leader. Every school should have a structure in place that will help every staff member implement the vision, as well as collaborate with colleagues to help each other review data and implement the vision. These structures are often called "leadership structures" because they also support shared decision making. The important elements of effective leadership structures include:

◆ *Partitioning of the school staff in a manner that makes sense for supporting the implementation of the vision.* For example, in elementary schools, establishing grade-level teams and cross-grade-level teams to implement the vision makes sense. This is especially effective since the focus is to make sure each teacher is implementing grade level standards, and to ensure that the standards are calibrated across grade levels. Most traditional high schools and middle schools have departments which could represent an effective leadership structure—if that structure supports the implementation of the vision. However, if the middle school or high school is trying to integrate subjects, individual subject-specific departments might keep the school from implementing its vision. The leadership structure must reflect the vision, and include all staff.

◆ *Clarifying purposes and roles and responsibilities of all teacher teams.* Getting the teachers to create and agree on the purpose and roles and responsibilities of each team helps them know the intricacies of that team, as well as contribute to the successful implementation of each team. A part of identifying roles and responsibilities is to set structures for norms, timed agendas, and rotating roles (facilitator, timekeeper, and recorder) to keep the team focus on student learning.

◆ *Identifying times to meet and keeping them sacred.* The teams meet, no matter what. There can be no cancellations because of other meetings. It is important to not put the principal as lead of any team. We find that the principal is often pulled out at the last minute, and then the team thinks the meeting has to be cancelled. However, the principal should participate in as many meetings as possible. To implement the vision with a strong leadership structure, the team meeting times and agendas must be adhered to. At least one hour per week needs to be dedicated to grade-level or subject-area teams to review data and update instruction. Additional time needs to be protected for leadership team meetings and other leadership teams. Time must be created. Many schools bank time by extending the school day four days a week, providing an early dismissal or late start for students, so teachers can meet for part of one day a week. An example of a Leadership structure follows (Figure 10.2). (See Appendix N, *Leadership Structure.*)

> **THE IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES**
>
> • *Partitioning of the school staff in a manner that makes sense for supporting the implementation of the vision.*
> • *Clarifying purposes and roles and responsibilities of all teacher teams.*
> • *Identifying times to meet and keeping them sacred.*

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Figure 10.2
EXAMPLE: SOMEWHERE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

Somewhere Elementary School's leadership structure is four-pronged:

- Grade-Level Teams
- Data Leadership Team
- Cross-Grade-Level-Teams
- Leadership Team

The mission and vision of the school guide all leadership components. The work of each team is guided by data and the continuous school improvement plan, with a focus on implementing the Common Core State Standards.

All meetings are scheduled on the school calendar. All meetings are open to all staff members; therefore, agendas will be sent in advance or with the current meeting minutes. In the event of additions and/or deletions to agendas, staff will be informed by e-mail.

Meeting Times

Team	Time	Day
Grade-Level Teams	1:45 to 3:00 PM	Wednesdays
Cross-Grade-Level Teams	3:05 to 4:15 PM	Alternate Wednesdays
Data Leadership Team	*(Calendared by the team)*	*(Calendared by the team)*
Leadership Team	3:05 to 4:30 PM	Thursdays
Whole Staff Meetings	3:05 to 4:15 PM	Every other Friday, and as needed

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the collective responsibility of all teachers, in grade-level teams and cross-grade-level teams, to work together to implement all aspects of the shared vision. All classroom teachers participate in grade-level team meetings on a weekly basis.

One teacher at each grade level serves as the Grade-Level Lead; this teacher sits on the Leadership Team. One teacher at each grade level serves on the Cross-Grade-Level Team. One teacher at each grade level serves on the Data Leadership Team.

Grade-Level Teams

The purpose of Grade-Level Teams is to maintain the cohesion of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and environment spelled out in the shared vision. Grade-Level Teams will:

- create, adopt, review, and revise norms as needed, in support of working effectively together;
- study together, coach each other, and support one another in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the school's vision;
- use data to update and improve each teacher's teaching;
- seek support from one another;
- study and support each other's implementation of best practices; and
- seek support from specialists on staff, as needed.

Grade-Level Team meetings will be conducted in each other's classrooms on a rotating basis and will follow the norms and support strategies.

Cross-Grade-Level Teams

The purpose of the Cross-Grade-Level Team is to focus on all teachers effectively implementing the Common Core State Standards. This structure is made up of representative grade-level team members and, as such, must practice clear and objective communication to the grade level they represent. Its members facilitate this team's work. The responsibilities of the Cross-Grade-Level Team include:

- focusing on instructional coherence for all core instruction;
- reviewing and clarifying the implementation of Common Core State Standards as they apply to stregthening effective classroom instruction schoolwide;
- working to strengthen the cross-grade-level alignment of curriculum instruction, assessment, and environment;
- sharing best practices and effective lessons toward the goal of bringing these to respective grade-level teams;
- making decisions about schoolwide instructional and assessment practices, related to consistency;
- planning and implementing professional learning.
- making budgetary recommendations to the Leadership Team in support of Common Core State Standards resource alignment; and
- planning and implementation of schoolwide programs.

Figure 10.2 *(Continued)*
EXAMPLE: SOMEWHERE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

Leadership Team

The Leadership Team is a decision-making body and, as such, members must practice clear and objective communication with the staff members whom they represent, and to fellow Leadership Team members as representatives for other staff members.

The Leadership Team is made up of the Principal, the Principal's Secretary, the Resource Specialist, and the lead from each grade-level team. Input from teachers will be communicated to the Grade-Level Lead, input from Instructional Assistants will be communicated via the Resource Specialist, and input from non-teaching staff will be communicated via the Principal's Secretary. The Issues Bin and the Anonymous Comments envelope are additional avenues for all staff to give input to the Leadership Team.

The purposes of the Leadership Team are to:
- support the implementation of Common Core State Standards within and across grade levels;
- guide, support, and reinforce the continuous school improvement plan using multiple sources of data;
- plan for the Data Leadership Teams to monitor use of data for the improvement of teaching and learning, schoolwide;
- provide ongoing input into budgetary decisions, all of which are based on data and available resources;
- oversee and approve the design of agendas for professional learning;
- disseminate information;
- troubleshoot the concerns of grade levels and individuals;
- improve and support school climate by modeling effective communication and leadership skills; and
- calendar schoolwide assessments and events.

Whole Staff Meetings

The entire staff will meet every other week to discuss the schoolwide implementation of the vision.

Principal

The role of the principal is to ensure:
- the implementation of the vision, plan, and leadership structure;
- staff receive the professional learning they need;
- all staff use data to impact learning for all students;
- quality instruction in every classroom;
- staff members collaborate to improve instruction; and
- communication is often and of high quality.

Cross-Grade-Level Teams

The purpose of the Cross-Grade-Level Team is to focus on all teachers effectively implementing the Common Core State Standards. This structure is made up of representative grade-level team members and, as such, must practice clear and objective communication to the grade level they represent. Its members facilitate this team's work. The responsibilities of the Cross-Grade-Level Team include:
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- sharing best practices and effective lessons toward the goal of bringing these to respective grade-level teams;
- making decisions about schoolwide instructional and assessment practices, related to consistency;
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- making budgetary recommendations to the Leadership Team in support of Common Core State Standards resource alignment; and
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Professional Learning Calendar Created from the Continuous School Improvement Plan and Leadership Structure

Through learning we re-create ourselves. Through learning we become able to do something we never were able to do. Through learning we re-perceive the world and our relationship to it. Through learning we extend our capacity to create, to be part of the generative process of life.

Peter M. Senge

Many principals have found the Professional Learning Calendar to be extremely valuable in keeping the whole school on target with implementing the vision, plan, and leadership structure.

Once the plan, based on the data analysis, vision, and leadership structure, is completed, school staff can benefit from a Professional Learning Calendar. A Professional Learning Calendar starts with those agreed upon times for the teams to meet, and then pulls from the plan what the teams should be working on at any point in the school year calendar; thereby setting the topic for each meeting. Many principals have found the Professional Learning Calendar to be extremely valuable in keeping the whole school on target with implementing the vision, plan, and leadership structure. Some principals say the use of the calendar makes things happen that have never happened before, even though the activities had been "planned." All the purposes or topics in the calendar are derived from the continuous school improvement plan. An example of a Professional Learning Calendar follows (Figure 10.3). (See Appendix O, *Professional Learning Calendar.*)

Figure 10.3
EXAMPLE: SOMEWHERE SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CALENDAR

The first month of the Somewhere School 2013-14 Professional Learning Calendar is shown in the example below. During 2013-14, the focus is on implementing the Core Curriculum State Standards. Every Wednesday, students will be dismissed at 1:30 pm for collaborative team meetings.

Date	Who Should Attend	Purpose
July 22-26 All day	Data Leadership Team	Attend the *Education for the Future Data Institute.* Create the School Data Profile, and plan for data analysis and use during the year. Reroster student data for current teachers and students.
August 19-23 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM	Professional Learning for all staff	Expectations for the year. Review of continuous school improvement. Analyze schoolwide, grade level, and classroom level data with staff. Clarify curriculum and instructional strategies that must change, based on the data analysis. Establish team members and team leaders. Review roles and responsibilities. Professional learning on analyzing and implementing the CCSS. Review where staff is on aligning curriculum and instructional resources to CCSS, and continue with standards analysis. Learn the elements of effective CCSS lessons, how to assess the lessons, and how to conduct lesson studies. Grade-level teams work to lay out the curriculum, lesson designs, and assessments for the year. Cross-grade-level teams meet to ensure alignment across grade levels. Leadership Team meets to establish how they will work during the year to monitor CCSS and vision implementation and student attainment.
August 26	Data Leadership Team	Determine how to support staff during the administration of the screening assessments and the retrieval of results.
August 27	First Day of School	School starts.
August 28	Initial Screener Administration	All teachers administer short online screening assessments to students to understand what they know and do not know.
August 28 1:45 to 3:00 PM	Grade-Level Teams	Meet to discuss the results of the screening assessments and to adjust planned lessons.
August 28 3:05 to 4:15 PM	Cross-Grade-Level Teams	Review grade level assessments for alignment. Establish a system to monitor assessment data and ensure the alignment of standards across grade levels, throughout the year.
August 29 3:05 to 4:30 PM	Leadership Team	Review grade level and cross-grade level team assessment results. Prepare agenda for all staff meetings.
August 30 3:05 to 4:15 PM	All staff meeting. Leadership Team facilitates.	Review Meet to discuss the first week. Plan for diagnostic assessments and additional support for students in need. Approve monitoring system for assessments and standards alignment.
September 2	School Closed	Labor Day.

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CHAPTER **10**
HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET TO WHERE WE WANT TO BE: IMPLEMENTING THE
SHARED VISION BY CREATING A PLAN FOR CONTINUOUS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Figure 10.3 *(Continued)*
EXAMPLE: SOMEWHERE SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CALENDAR

Date	Who Should Attend	Purpose
September 4 1:45 to 3:00 PM	Grade-Level Team	Review diagnostic assessment data. Agree on lesson plans and learning structures for students in need. Review instructional resource requirements.
September 5 3:05 to 4:30 PM	Leadership Team	Review grade-level team status. Continue planning for the provision of instructional and technology resources so each grade level can implement the CCSS with integrity and fidelity.
September 11 1:45 to 3:00 PM	Grade-Level Teams	Conduct lesson studies in implementing the CCSS. Determine what support each teacher needs and how it will be provided.
September 11 3:05 to 4:15 PM	Cross-Grade-Level Team	Verify CCSS implementation across grade levels. Share grade level needs and discuss commonalities to present to the Leadership Team.
September 12 3:05 to 4:30 PM	Leadership Team	Review grade level and cross-grade level team progress, concerns, and support requirements. Continue planning for the year.
September 13 3:05 to 4:15 PM	All Staff Meeting Leadership Team facilitates	Review the schoolwide implementation of the CCSS and school vision. Staff members report on CCSS implementation. Discuss staff needs and adjustments required. Introduce a communication protocol for lesson study.
September 18 1:45 to 3:00 PM	Grade-Level Team	Conduct lesson study.
September 19 3:05 to 4:30 PM	Leadership Team	Determine how to prepare teachers for the first sets of common formative assessments.
September 19 3:05 to 4:30 PM	Data Leadership Team	Prepare to support teachers in implementing the first sets of common formative assessments. Determine assessment reports that will assist staff in implementing and assessing standards attainment. Begin the search for the questionnaires to administer in October.
September 25 1:45 to 3:00 PM	Grade-Level Team	Review progress. Teachers begin to take turns presenting their student work, data, and questions for team member support.
September 25 3:05 to 4:15 PM	Cross-Grade-Level Team	Monitor assessment data and ensure the alignment of standards across grade levels

Plan for Partners

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,
concerned citizens can change the world.
Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

Continuous school improvement calls for real partnerships among the schools' parents, businesses, and the community—partnerships that are consistent, organized, and centered on meaningful communication. This communication allows partners to play important roles in childrens' education across academic, behavioral, and social domains and help them be College and Career Ready. (See Appendix P for *Creating Partnerships.*) A *Somewhere Elementary School Example Partnership Plan* follows in Figure 10.4.

Leadership structures, professional learning, and partnership work together to help everyone on staff implement the vision. All of these components are a part of the continuous school improvement plan.

Leadership structures, professional learning, and partnership work together to help everyone on staff implement the vision.

Figure 10.4
EXAMPLE: SOMEWHERE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP PLAN

Somewhere Elementary School staff created a Partnership Team to develop strategic partnerships to support 21st Century Learning in our classrooms. The Partnership Team is striving for win-win partnerships with our colleagues, parents, the community, and businesses to support and build student creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication skills.

Our plan is to have an open meeting each semester with parents, community, and business to:

1. Provide awareness of the Common Core State Standards.
2. Define 21st Century Skills and why they are important.
3. Describe what it might look like if we were implementing the standards together.
4. Brainstorm ideas about how we can work together to help all students meet the Common Core Standards and gain 21st Century Skills.

Teachers need to plan partnership lessons in terms of student understandings of how systems work, how communities operate, where materials come from, and what students can do to become contributing members of society. Consider how to incorporate the following in lessons:

- Museums and libraries
- Health Clubs
- City Works
- Technology
- Internships with Businesses
- Tours of local businesses
- Colleges and Universities
- Music and dance performances
- Parks

- Speakers Bureau for Students
- Blogs to discuss skills required for different careers
- Book in common discussions
- Meetings with Politicians
- Hospitals
- TV and radio
- Service learning projects
- Grocery stores
- Farms and Farmers' Markets

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CHAPTER 10
HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET TO WHERE WE WANT TO BE: IMPLEMENTING THE
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HOW MUCH TIME DOES IT TAKE?

It will take a couple of hours to create a Leadership Structure, complete with roles and responsibilities, if your school does not have something like this in place. The actual writing of the comprehensive continuous school improvement plan could take a week of going back and forth with staff.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are the differences between a continuous school improvement plan and a school improvement plan focused on closing gaps?

2. Why is a continuous school improvement plan important to continuous school improvement?

3. Why are leadership, professional learning, and partnership development important to continuous school improvement and the continuous school improvement plan?

APPLICATION OPPORTUNITIES

1. Create a continuous school improvement plan to implement your shared vision. (Use *Continuous School Improvement Plan,* Appendix L.)

2. Construct a leadership structure, complete with roles and responsibilities, that will help everyone in the learning organization implement the vision. (Use *Leadership Structure,* Appendix N.)

3. Generate a professional learning calendar by laying out the dates of team meetings and professional learning and who should attend. From the continuous school improvement plan, determine the purpose of the meetings. If the calendar looks undoable, you will need to revise your school plan. (Use *Professional Learning Calendar,* Appendix O.)

4. Produce a plan for partnerships. Start with your standards. What do you want students to know and be able to do? With potential partners, brainstorm what each can do to support students in achieving the standards. (Use *Creating Partnerships,* Appendix P.)